

(16) the Maryland Association of Counties;

(17) the Maryland Rural Health Association;

(18) organizations representing schools, libraries, colleges, universities, and high technology councils; and

(19) any other group, organization, or person, as determined by the Chairman of the Task Force.

(h) The Task Force shall:

(1) shall consider developments and best practices in regions of the country where broadband communications is being deployed for are being deployed in rural communities, the broadband networking infrastructure in those areas, and the direct and indirect benefits and costs associated with the networks;

(2) after considering existing State and regional broadband communications assessments and information that may become available during the deliberations of the Task Force, shall evaluate:

(i) the resources, infrastructure, and cost structures now in place or available in the various rural regions of the State for developing or ~~accessing~~ obtaining access to broadband communications;

(ii) the feasibility of using existing or alternative legal mechanisms and infrastructure to support the economical development of broadband communications in rural areas of the State;

(iii) the utility of several applications where broadband communications would be beneficial to benefit rural areas, such as applications relating to agriculture, medicine, and education; and

(iv) other matters that the Task Force considers pertinent to establishing effective broadband communications in the rural areas of the State;

(3) shall encourage the development of specific goals for the State in the deployment of broadband communications in rural areas, including:

(i) the development of economically competitive access to broadband communications by the public and private sectors in each rural region of the State;

(ii) the availability of broadband communications access throughout the rural areas of the State to address issues of universal service in unserved and underserved communities;

(iii) the development and expansion of practical applications for the enhancement of economic development, and other public benefits;

(iv) the development of affinities and interconnection among the governmental units in the State, educational institutions, and private industry; and